

Hot dog!

Number 16

DREW BARRYMORE



E.T.'s Favorite Girl!



HOT DOG! It's a New Year!

Ring in the New Year with HOT DOG — and start the year off right! Just look at the Hot Doin's in this issue. Then have a happy HOT DOG!

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BEHIND THE SCENES OF THE DARK CRYSTAL

The stars of the movie *The Dark Crystal* are terrific actors. They act so well you might think such creatures as Gelflings, Garthims, Skeksis, and Pod People are real. But the actors in *The Dark Crystal* are not like any movie stars you've ever seen. They are life-size puppets. There isn't a single human actor starring in the movie!

Going Through a Stage

Because the stars are puppets, the movie sets of *The Dark Crystal* were different from other movie sets. The stage floor had sections that could be

lifted out. Underneath were runways where puppeteers stood. They held the puppets up through the holes. The cameras only filmed the puppets, not the people below.

There are lots of people behind the scenes of *The Dark Crystal*.



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There were plenty of humans behind the scenes. They included hundreds of crew members and lots of puppeteers. The team was led by Jim Henson and Frank Oz. Jim and Frank created the Muppets. Both men directed *The Dark Crystal*. That was a big job.

Not only did they direct the movie, but they also operated puppets. You could say they had their hands full! Jim handled Jen, the hero of the movie. Jen is an elflike creature called a Gelfling. He must get the Dark Crystal, a powerful glowing stone, from the evil Skeksis. Frank Oz handled a few puppets, including a strange-looking creature called Aughra, Keeper of Secrets.

*Jen is the hero of **The Dark Crystal**.*



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Pulling a Few Strings

Jim needed only one hand to hold up the small puppet of Jen. He used his other hand to work the controls that make Jen's face move. Like all the puppets, Jen can make faces by moving his eyes, ears, and mouth. Producer Gary Kurtz told HOT DOG how the controls work.

"We use a wire that's like a bicycle brake cable," he explained. "Or we use radio signals that don't use any wires."

With radio control, the puppets are moved by means of an electronic system.

With wire control, one end of a wire is attached to a puppet. The other end of the wire is attached to something that looks like a bicycle brake handle. As the puppeteer tightens and loosens his grip on the handle, the wire pulls different expressions from the puppet.

One character, the Chamberlain, can make up to 21 different faces. Making faces makes all the puppets look real and alive!

Jim Henson (left) and Frank Oz (right) talk about how they want a scene to look.



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Using His Head

Frank Oz had a hard time with the puppet, Aughra. It weighed more than 30 pounds and went on over Frank's head.

"It's a real workout just to move it around," Frank told HOT DOG. "Aughra is one of the hardest puppets to work with. I also worked one of the Skeksis. That's the same thing. I'm all the way inside the puppet."

Frank couldn't see very well, so there was a small TV screen inside the costume. It helped him see where he was going. Frank needed both hands to work Aughra. He needed a four-person crew to handle the controls of Aughra's face.

This Skeksis is one of the bad guys in the movie.



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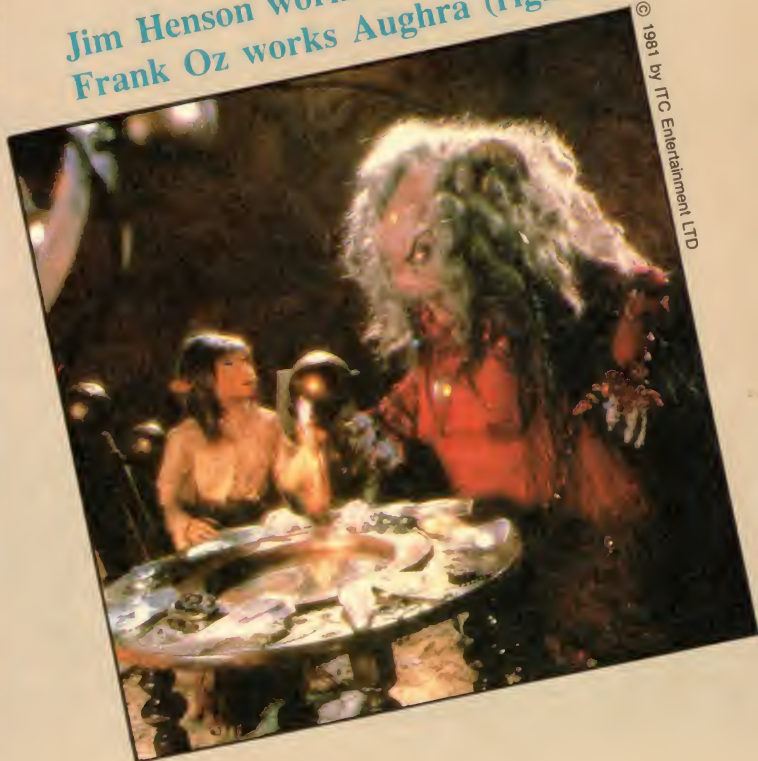
Other puppets that need more than one person are the Mystics. "The Mystics are life-size costumes with actors underneath," Gary said. "A Mystic has four arms. Two are held up by the puppeteer. Two more are held up by invisible wires held off camera by two crew members."

"The puppets can't do everything a human actor can," Jim said. "They can't fight. They can't reach over and pick up props. We had to be like magicians with a whole batch of tricks to fool audiences," he said.

The creatures may not look like most movie stars, but everyone will be caught under their spell. Once you've seen them, you'll have to agree they're a real class act!

Article by Chip Lovitt

Jim Henson works Jen (left), and Frank Oz works Aughra (right).



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